

A cooperative partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts
and Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

Louisiana

NRCS Conservation Update

November 2008 Edition 9

Special Edition - 2008



"EQIP has enabled me to make improvements on the land that I would not have been able to do otherwise," Mr. Jason Benoit, landowner and a cooperator with the

Jefferson Davis Soil and Water Conservation District... more on page 3.



"Working in a cooperative effort with the City of Covington has been an excellent experience.

Together, we are helping people help the land," Darron

Cooper, area soil conservation technician... more on page 11.



"We deeply appreciate the support that Bayou Land RC&D has given to the John Martyn School Tree Farm Project," Joe Baucum, President of Louisiana Urban Forestry Council... more on page 12.



The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Eidtor's Note
I want to thank
all those who
contributed to
this publication
and all the past
Conservation
Updates. Without
your assistance,
the Conservation
Update would not
exist.

Thank You

Stuart A. Lee



Notes from the State Conservationist

If asked a year ago about the possibilities of achieving our goals, deliverables and maintain our dedication toward improving natural resources in Louisiana for the coming year, I would have been just as proud with my response then as I am today. We have a top-notch team of skilled professionals – employees and partners, that are working together to meet and exceed any obstacles ahead of us this year, next year and on into the future. Our workload has been great. What has been asked of us has been even greater, but our accomplishments have been awe-inspiring. Within this publication, you'll read several narratives that are a reflection of just some of the many accomplishments we've fulfilled.

NRCS employees, the Louisiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development Councils, landowners and our many other partners have a bigger horizon in front of us, and as each fiscal year ends and a new one begins, together we lead our state further ahead. We've seen many changes this year. Some friends have retired or moved away, while at the same time we've gained new employees, partners and customers. One Farm Bill ended and a new one has begun. As we have fewer and fewer Hurricane Katrina projects, we've unfortunately gained new projects as a result of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. However, like with each passing year, these obstacles, gains, losses and benefits are taken with consummate progress and makes our determination healthier, as seen in our successes.

In the coming year, we will be working through our cooperative conservation partnership to deliver the new Farm Bill, which comes with changes to existing programs, as well as new ones. With this effort will come communication, outreach, and delivering awareness - awareness of not only the Farm Bill, but also the vital importance of restoring, enhancing and sustaining our indispensable natural resources. One key role in achieving this goal is the locally lead conservation process. Through an active 'Locally Led' process, agencies, partners and community members take an active role in recognizing local resource concerns, and then begin to address those concerns through a partnership effort. This process helps us tie our good works, services and partnerships to communities across the state.

As we change our calendars, tie-up loose ends, and prepare to work on a new business plan and Farm Bill – today, I can say with great pride, we will achieve our goals and deliverables and maintain our dedication toward improving natural resources. How can I say this so boastfully? Because Louisiana has the best team of natural resource stewards that are partnering together to Help People Help the Land.

With great thanks and admiration,

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist

Locally Led Conservation

Resting in the hands of our local community members is the future of our valuable natural resources and the decisions that are made to conserve, enhance and sustain the integrity of soil, water and air quality throughout Louisiana. Conservation of our resources can not be achieved by one group, government agency or the individual – it takes cooperative conservation.

Cooperative conservation starts first with the active involvement of the individual community member who helps to identify the resource needs of the community. Community involvement helps local SWCD and the NRCS assess and prioritize resource concerns on a community level. Local natural resource priorities help direct technical and financial assistance decisions that NRCS and SWCD make throughout the year. Locally led conservation efforts are successful with the help from our residents. Through locally led conservation meetings held throughout the state, the SWCD and NRCS were able to hear the concerns of our communities. At the meetings, residents were able to voice concerns, provide comments and help to identify conservation issues. Through this process, our conservation partnership was able to set conservation priorities based on local input. These conservation priorities will help us in our conservation efforts.

Top Resource Concerns/Needs *(Concerns from locally led meetings, voted on by the district)*

Resource Concern	Estimated Cost
1. Plant - Plant Condition, Productivity, Health and Vigor	\$1,627,498,381
2. Animals - Domestic Animals, Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage	\$891,676,880
3. Soil - Soil Erosion, Sheet and Rill	\$2,493,462,052
4. Plants - Plant Condition, Noxious and Invasive Plants	\$864,613,220
5. Soil - Soil Erosion, Classic Gully	\$1,721,103,068
6. Water - Water Quality, Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	\$1,448,084,624
7. Water - Water Quality, Excessive Runoff, Flooding or Ponding	\$3,200,776,265
8. Water - Water Quality, Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	\$647,575,275
9. Water - Water Quality, Aquifer Overdraft	\$808,728,031
10. Water - Water Quality, Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land	\$866,541,352
11. Soil - Soil Condition, Subsidence	\$1,448,970,000
12. Soil - Soil Erosion, Shoreline	\$6,704,479,260
13. Soil - Soil Condition, Organic Matter Depletion	\$525,189,176
14. Animals - Fish and Wildlife, Imbalance Among and Within Populations	\$231,335,525
15. Animals - Domestic Animals, Inadequate Stock Water	\$113,212,746

CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Above:
Mr. David
Daigle.
Right:
Cattle on
Daigle's
farm.



LOUISIANA CTA SUCCESS

The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program is the foundation of conservation technical assistance and serves to focus on natural resource issues at the local level that are of local, state, multi-state, and national concern. The CTA program works in partnership with locally led decision-making processes and other conservation programs to augment the federal investment in order to address national priorities in concert with local and state needs most effectively. The purpose of the CTA program is to provide technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. The CTA program provides the proven and consistent conservation technology and delivery infrastructure needed to achieve the benefits of a healthy and productive landscape.

Mr. David Daigle, a resident of Ragley, is a cattleman, forest land owner, environmental consultant, and former LDEQ Southwest Regional Office manager and water quality inspector. He has always been interested in conservation and sustainability of the natural resources entrusted to him. Utilizing his 40-herd herd of cattle, 20 acres of introduced-species pasture land, 520 acres of native plant/Longleaf savannah land, and 220 acres of mature Longleaf forest land, David has experimented and worked closely with SWCD and NRCS to determine how to maximize his available resources. David strives to integrate profitable production of beef cattle and trees while at the same time sustaining native plants, animals, and introduced forage on his property. Through this self-initiated conservation research, David has become a believer in flash grazing of native plants. "I believe flash grazing of native plants," David explains, "recreates a phenomenon that took place for thousands of years. Large ungulate animals, sometimes in large herds, would move through and graze longleaf pine savannahs. This would not only maintain the plant diversity of the prairies, but would help disperse seeds and reduce competition from invasive species."

On his savannah and forest land, David conducts prescribed burns every two to three years. Along with productivity of his timber, the creation of wildlife habitat and the reduction of invasive species are foremost in his mind. David also has all 760 acres of his land enrolled in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red Cockaded Woodpecker Safe Harbors program. Mr. Daigle believes that protection of this endangered species is an integral part of his overall land management operation. David spreads the word about this and many other conservation practices whenever he has the chance.

(CTA) Plans Totals	# Planned	Applied
2008	1088 no.	959
2007	1338 no.	1053
2006	1239 no.	1019
2005	673 no.	346

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was established by the 1996 Farm Bill and reauthorized in the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bill to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals and helps farmers meet state and federal environmental requirements. In Louisiana, the top five practices were Nutrient Management, Irrigation Land Leveling, Grade Stabilization Structure, Pasture and Hayland Planting and Heavy Use Area Protection. For the year, more than 178,000 acres were enrolled in EQIP and more than \$21,911,323 in EQIP funds were obligated.



HEAVY USE AREA PROTECTION A BIG SUCCESS IN NATCHITOCHE PARISH

The Natchitoches Field Office has been very active in assisting landowners address resource concerns through the implementation of the practice Heavy Use Area Protection. This practice has been used extensively throughout the parish to address problems that livestock producers have when cattle congregate to move from one pasture to another. The problem can be so severe that cattle are sometimes found actually stuck in gate openings due to excessive bogging. Through the installation of rock according to the specifications of the Heavy Use Area Protection practice, producers have reduced animal stress and increased animal health. It has also resulted in reduced erosion and improved water quality on the farms that have installed the practice through the EQIP program. Over 50 gate openings in Natchitoches Parish were treated in Fiscal Year 2008 with the practice.



Before and After photos of heavy use area protection, Glenn Austin



IRRIGATION LAND LEVELING AND IRRIGATION WATER CONVEYANCE

Jason Benoit, a cooperator with the Jefferson Davis Soil and Water Conservation District and the Jennings NRCS field office has participated in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for several years. Mr. Benoit is a rice and crawfish producer. He has installed practices that have benefited his operation including Irrigation Land Leveling; Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline; and Grade Stabilization Structures. Mr. Benoit said "the practices we have installed through EQIP have saved significant pumping costs in addition to significant soil savings and improved water quality. Also, as a result of these practices, my crop yields have increased."

D. Scott Romero District Conservationist Jennings Field Office and Jason Benoit



***"EQIP has enabled me to make improvements on the land that I would not have been able to do otherwise,"
Mr. Jason Benoit, landowner and a cooperator with the
Jefferson Davis Soil and Water Conservation District...***

OVERVIEW WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

WHIP - Shallow Water Area Success

Mr. Andrew Andries didn't know that retirement would turn into just plain old hard work. Rebuilding an old farm house was physically and mentally taxing with time and money making the decisions, but he found it even harder to properly manage a 5-acre hay field located at the back of his property in Forest Hill. After contacting the Alexandria NRCS Field Office, Mr. Andries started working on creating a wildlife area on his land. "I just wanted an area of quiet outdoor enjoyment for myself and the opportunity for my grandson to enjoy nature and outdoor recreation," said Mr. Andries.

Once the initial site visits were completed by NRCS and Rapides SWCD, Mr. Andries was provided some options to consider in turning his land into a wildlife area. He wanted to create suitable habitat for ducks, fur bearers, amphibians and invertebrates. Mr. Andries then requested cost-share assistance through WHIP to help ease the financial burden of the project. Wetland Habitat Management, Critical Area Planting, Dike, Structure for Water Control, and Shallow Water Development and Management were planned. Mr. Andries also requested assistance with establishment of a temporary vegetation on the spoil utilizing a more wildlife beneficial species until the Bermuda took hold. He shortly replanted the spoil to Browntop Millet and was ready for Hurricane Gustav's rain by late August!

He recently called the Alexandria NRCS Field Office to give an update on the ducks he watches while enjoying the sunset from his lawn chair located near the shallow end. "My old friends are jealous of my new 'treasure', and I don't pass up an opportunity to show-it-off. I thank the NRCS and Rapides SWCD for the help and I finally get to 'retire', a little," said Mr. Andries.



Mr. Andrew Andries and Bobby Carter, NRCS soil conservation technician

Louisiana practices installed under WHIP includes: Dikes, Prescribed Burning, Tree Establishment, Structures for Waterfowl, Shallow Water Management for Wildlife and Brush Management.

Total dollars funded in Louisiana from 1998 to 2007 = \$3,367,436. Top five most occurring WHIP practices for 2008; Prescribed Burning, Ponds, Tree and Shrub Establishment, Conservation Cover and Dikes. This past year, more than \$1,136,045 WHIP funds were obligated throughout Louisiana.

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

Louisiana Black Bear

The Louisiana Black Bear was once considered abundant, but in 1950, estimates showed that 80 to 120 bears remained in Louisiana and were restricted only to the Atchafalaya and Tensas River Basins. Black Bears require relatively large contiguous areas of bottomland hardwood forest, which were common to the Mississippi River Delta. One of the methods to reduce habitat loss is the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). WRP restores cropland, former and degraded wetlands and riparian buffers. This restoration consists of planting hardwood trees best suited for the site, hydrology restoration and creating small openings

which encourage the growth of desirable herbaceous plants. Through restoration efforts such as WRP, bear numbers are now estimated at 500 to 700 black bears in Louisiana.

WRP End of Year FY 2008

Number of Contract	2
Acres	600
Easement Dollars	\$374,184.00



OVERVIEW WATER RESOURCES

CWPPRA - BLACK BAYOU CULVERTS

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) program provides for targeted funds to be used for planning and implementing projects that create, protect, restore, and enhance wetlands in coastal Louisiana. NRCS is the federal sponsor for 55 CWPPRA projects valued at approximately \$422,037,686 benefiting 35,596 acres of Louisiana's valuable coastal wetlands. Construction has been completed on 31 of the NRCS sponsored CWPPRA projects.

The CS-29 Black Bayou Culverts Hydrologic Restoration Project was constructed to provide additional drainage capability within the western edge of the Mermentau River Basin. Prior to the construction of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Calcasieu Lock structures, Black Bayou served as the natural drainage route for the western edge of the Mermentau Basin. With the construction of Louisiana Highway 384, the Black Bayou drainage path to the Calcasieu River was blocked. In conjunction with the poor floodwater relief offered by the Calcasieu Lock, the dam created in Black Bayou hindered the escape of floodwaters from the Mermentau Basin. By re-opening Black Bayou at its intersection with Louisiana Highway 384, floodwater is allowed to escape the basin, while also preventing saltwater from entering the basin from the Calcasieu River. This project is an important aid in the lowering of the basin interior water elevation to give relief from prolonged inundation of marsh vegetation, which causes marsh loss and shoreline erosion.

This project was put to the test during the 2008 Hurricane Season. The surge from Hurricane Ike pushed water nearly all the way to Lake Charles from the coastline. Two days before Ike made landfall in Galveston, TX, the pins were pulled on the structure which allowed the gates to open once water levels dropped in Calcasieu Lake allowing for the drainage of floodwaters caused by the storm.

"The populous of southern Calcasieu and all of Cameron Parish thank NRCS for the pre-planning and actions that are in place at Black Bayou Culverts. NRCS is to be commended on their efficiency in this time of crisis," stated David Richard,



Executive Vice President of Stream Property Management, Inc. For more information on CWPPRA, please visit www.lacoast.gov.

RAPID WATERSHED ASSESSMENTS

NRCS in Louisiana was one of 19 states that received funding in 2007 through the Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance Division to develop five Rapid Watershed Assessments (RWAs). RWAs provide initial estimates of where conservation investments would best address concerns. These assessments help landowners and local leaders set priorities and determine the best actions to achieve their goals. The assessments developed in Louisiana

were: Upper Saline Bayou, encompassing 134,000 acres in northwest Louisiana; Lower Saline Bayou, encompassing 130,000 acres in northwest Louisiana; Cane Bayou, encompassing 26,000 acres in northwest Louisiana; Lake Natchez-Bourbeaux Bayou, encompassing 16,585 acres in northcentral Louisiana; and Lower Mermentau River, encompassing 1.3 million acres in southwest Louisiana

The assessments were completed in July 2008 and are posted on the NRCS Louisiana Web site at www.la.nrcs.usda.gov.

COASTAL IMPACT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Lafourche Parish requested assistance from NRCS in planning and designing the Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation and Enhancement Project, authorized and funded by the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). Erosion along the northwest Little Lake shoreline causes a direct loss of marsh acreage and threatens to breach the thin remnant of marsh which separates Little Lake from larger interior water bodies. The goals of this project are to reduce shoreline erosion rates, create marsh in interior open water bodies, and enhance a band of marsh along the Little Lake shoreline to maintain shoreline integrity. For more information about CIAP, please visit: <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/crm/ciap/ciap.asp>.

Above: Construction photos of the CS-29 Black Bayou Culverts Hydrologic Restoration Project.

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Restructuring

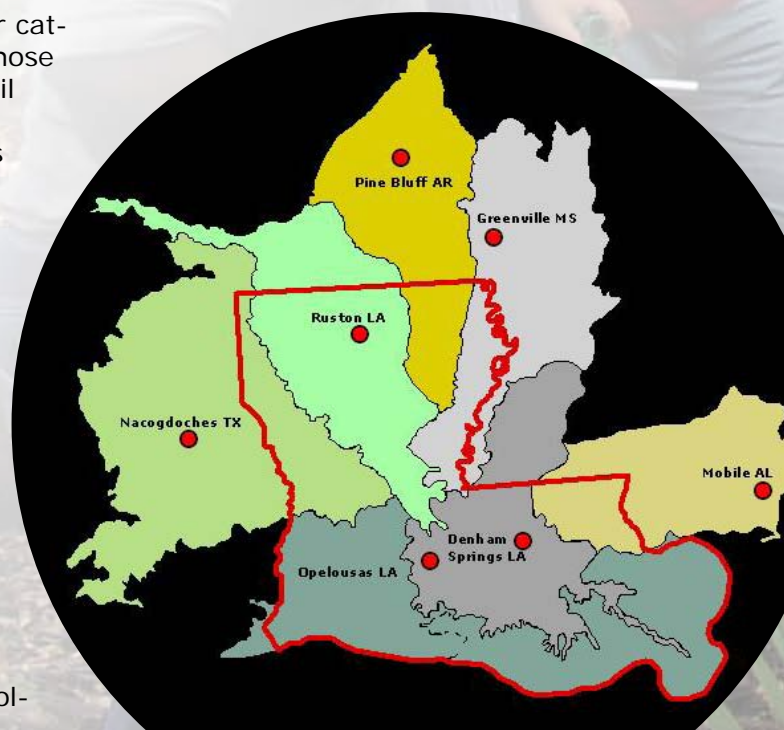
The Natural Resources Conservation Service is implementing a realignment of the National Cooperative Soil Survey in the United States, including Louisiana. This realignment is explained in the Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Restructuring Plan. MLRAs are geographically associated Land Resource Units (LRUs). Identification of these large areas is important in statewide agricultural planning and has value in interstate, regional, and national planning. The objective of the agency is to have a nationally consistent digital soil survey of the nation. This will ensure quality and consistency across a broad geographic area that has similar soils with the goal of eliminating the mismatch in mapped soils at state and parish boundaries. The Soil Survey Division will re-balance its focus toward the three remaining core mission functions. 1) Make an inventory of the soil resources of the United States; 2) Keep the soil survey relevant to ever-changing needs; 3) Promote the soil survey and provide technical assistance in its use for a wide range of community planning and resource development issues related to non-farm and farm uses. The Soil Survey Division envisions that as users gain greater access to soil survey information, especially through the Web Soil Survey, they will use the soil survey for a wider range of purposes, discover deficiencies in the data, and place demands on the soil survey that were not anticipated during the initial inventory.

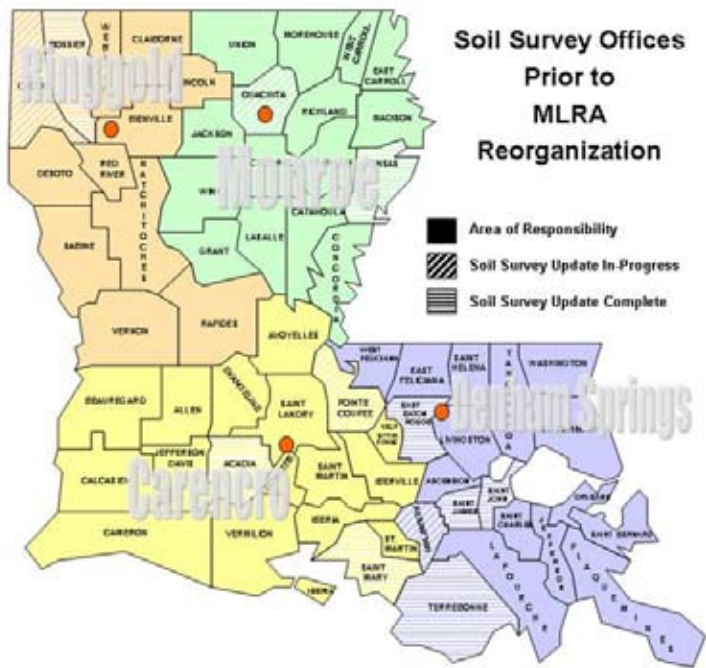
These evolving demands will lead to increased and continual emphasis on data quality and data completeness. Analysis of single soils will no longer be adequate, and predictions of behavior across entire soil landscapes integrated with other factors (climate, land-use, demographics) will be needed to address increasingly complex needs.

The demand for soil survey information is growing and requests for specific data and analysis are constantly evolving and continually changing. MLRA Soil Surveys will improve the accuracy and consistency of soil survey information. Please visit our Soil Survey web-page at: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> as we continue to make the realignment of the soil survey a success. You can also visit NRCS on the web at www.nrcs.la.usda.gov for all of your conservation needs.

MLRA Soil Surveys will eliminate the 100 years of "by county" patchwork and improve the accuracy and consistency of soil survey information. MLRA soil survey's increase productivity because soil scientist will map similar catenas of soils and become expert in those soils' mapping and interpretation. Soil Surveys conducted by MLRA will not be completed in the same manner as the initial soil surveys. Soil scientists will use new technology including Geographical Information System (GIS), remote sensing and landscape predictive models. They will travel to the field to check areas that, after analysis, appear to be wrong.

Soil mapping is best done as a team. With 3 to 5 people, it allows some to specialize in certain areas such as geospatial technologies (GPS, GIS and remote sensing) for landscape analysis (topography, vegetation, climate, geol-





ogy, and hydrology), soil data comparison, soil data analysis and population, soil classification, etc. This leads to improved team performance, job satisfaction, and improved quality of the soil survey. For the new soil scientist, there is a trove of information about soils, soil landscapes, soil behavior, etc. that cannot be gained except through on the job training with soil scientists experienced in an area.

Watershed Boundary Dataset

The NRCS, Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have worked with USGS, other federal state agencies, tribes and with the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data to establish "Federal Standards for Delineation of Hydrologic Unit Boundaries". Louisiana NRCS received funding to delineate, sub-basins, watersheds, and sub-watersheds to these standards. Sub-basins are hydrologic units with an average size of 450,000 acres. Watersheds range from 40,000 to 250,000 acres. Sub-watersheds generally range from 10,000 to 40,000 acres. As of October 2008, NRCS has digitized delineations of the entire state's sub-basins, watersheds and sub-watersheds, and submitted the work for national review and certification.

Planned MLRA soil survey areas involving Louisiana

LOUISIANA ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Master Farmer

The Louisiana Master Farmer Program helps agricultural producers voluntarily address the environmental concerns related to production agriculture, as well as enhance their production and resource management skills that will be critical for the continued viability of Louisiana agriculture. This program involves producers becoming more knowledgeable about environmental stewardship, resource-based production and resource management through a voluntary producer certification process. Throughout the year Master Farmer workshops have been conducted. One example of this educational element of the Master Farmer Program was the Model Farm Field Day conducted on the farm of Kenneth LaHaye in Evangeline Parish. Approximately 50 people were in attendance, with approximately 35-40 of them farmers or ranchers. During the field day, NRCS personnel discussed EQIP assistance related to cropland and livestock. A Louisiana Master Farmer should: demonstrate knowledge of and dedication to environmental stewardship; demonstrate mastery levels of conservation-based production; demonstrate resource management through the implementation of a comprehensive conservation plan; and promote the success of local-level conservation to the agricultural community and public and private interests.



Master Farmer presentation at the farm of Kenneth LaHaye

The Master Farm Program is a cooperative conservation partnership effort among NRCS, Louisiana State University Ag Center, Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana Cattlemen's Association and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Currently, there are 89 participants certified or eligible for Master Farmer Certification.

GRAZING LANDS CONSERVATION INITIATIVE'S (GLCI)

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative's (GLCI) mission is to provide high quality technical assistance on privately owned grazing lands on a voluntary basis and to increase the awareness of the importance of grazing land resources. Louisiana has 7 grazing lands specialists spending 100 percent of their time providing technical assistance on grazing lands.

Sixty grazing lands presentations (workshops, seminars, tours, field days, etc.) were conducted across the state in 2008. A total of 2007 producers participated in these events. Many of the events were sponsored by a local Grazing/Pasture Walk Group.

Grazing/Pasture Walk Groups are groups of ranchers who work together to increase their knowledge of forage management, pasture-based production and farm economics. They promote a mutual self-help approach to learning in which each member is both a student and a teacher (rancher-to-rancher learning).

The members share their experiences and offer advice to one another, organize educational events around their common interests and spend some time socializing. In Louisiana, NRCS Grazing Lands Specialists act as coordinators for the local grazing groups, but the leadership comes from within the group. Louisiana currently has 6 active Grazing/Pasture Walk Groups.

One of our many successful pasture walks occurred at a farm in Doyline, Louisiana. The farm is owned and operated by Trudie Cable. Trudie grazes beef cattle, horses, llamas and a few zebras. The group's main discussion centered on nutrient cycling and how rotational grazing helps to distribute the manure and urine more evenly and efficiently.



PLANT MATERIALS



Morris Houck giving a plant materials demonstration.

The purpose of the program is to provide native plants and plant related technology that can help solve natural resource problems. Beneficial uses for which plant material may be developed include coastal shoreline and dune stabilization, biomass production, carbon sequestration, erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, streambank and riparian area protection, and other special conservation treatment needs. Scientists at the Plant Materials Centers seek out plants that show promise for meeting an identified conservation need and test their performance. After multiple years of testing, plant selections are released to the private sector for commercial production. The Plant Materials Center in Galliano is busy with new plant studies that are being established and with off-center sites that are being evaluated.

Morris Houck, NRCS state plant materials specialist, is working with producers and landowners to promote the use of plant materials and related techniques to solve conservation problems. One such individual is Jeannie Rogers of Grand Cane, Louisiana. Jeannie is one of only a few organic hay producers in Louisiana and is donating land and time to establish a native grass demonstration site on her farm for others to see the benefit of using native plants. Jeannie is interested in native plants and their benefit for forage and wildlife. Working with the assistance of the Twin Valley RC&D and Morris Houck, Jeannie was able to establish a small mixed prairie demonstration planting and also establish several single species demo blocks. Her plans are to use each of these sites as nurseries for seed harvest to be used at other locations on the farm.

Louisiana is served by three plant materials centers (Golden Meadow, East Texas, and Jamie L. Whitten) that provide assistance to the state. Each center serves an area within the state of Louisiana that represents unique land resource areas.

Center Visits:

Two local groups recently visited the Golden Meadow center and were surprised that such a facility existed in "their backyard". The congregation of the Golden Meadow Methodist Church and the Red Hat Society, both active civic groups, took the opportunity to tour the center and learn about activities at the PMC and how the center is contributing towards the restoration of the coastal marsh. Many of our plant materials centers are one of the best kept local secrets... and the secret is finally getting out!



EMERGENCY Watershed Protection Program

HELPING TO RESTORE LOUISIANA AFTER THE STORMS

August 29, 2005, will be a date that changed the lives and landscape of Louisiana forever, but Hurricane Katrina did not stop us from partnering together and moving forward toward a greater environment. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the city of Covington partnered together through numerous projects to restore Louisiana's natural resources that were damaged after the hurricane. The last of these projects was complete this fall thanks in part to the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program.

The Bogue Falaya and Tchefuncte Rivers Project was conducted under EWP to remove Hurricane Katrina debris that posed a threat to human safety and natural resources within the rivers. The purpose of the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program is to undertake emergency measures, including the purchase of flood plain easements, for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood or any other natural occurrence is causing or has caused a sudden impairment of the watershed.

"The hurricane left tons of debris in waterways throughout the state," said Edmund Giering, state engineer for NRCS. "Removal of debris from the rivers within this project will eradicate the threat to health and safety that it posed—we restored drainage and the project provided safe boating and recreational use in the rivers."

Downed trees and identified underwater obstructions that pose a threat to health and safety were removed from the Tchefuncte River from the confluence with the Bogue Falaya to Dogwood Drive. The same kind of obstructions was removed on the Bogue Falaya River from a point approximately 3500 feet north of I-12 to the abandoned railroad trestle north of US Hwy 190 (Boston Street).

"I am relieved that we have been able to get this project off the ground and I am very grateful to the NRCS for their assistance," said Covington Mayor Candice Watkins.

The work was performed under a federal contract as a result of the request of Mayor Watkins. The contract amount was \$394,583.70.

"This project encompasses three years of contracting, and it is rewarding to see all this work implemented on



Vickie Supler, Mayor Candice Watkins, Darron Cooper

the ground," Vicki Supler, NRCS contracting officer.

There have been approximately 20 EWP projects in the greater Covington area.

"Working in a cooperative effort with the City of Covington has been an excellent experience. Together, we are helping people help the land," said Darron Cooper, area soil conservation technician.

Operated EWP Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) in Metairie and in DeRidder prior to closure of DeRidder EOC.

* Completed the following EWP Activities in FY08
Hurricanes Katrina & Rita

+ Traditional EWP

Channel debris removal

74.6 Miles

Tons of debris removed

23,579 Tons

Repairs to channel side slopes

3.6 Miles

Sediment removed from channels

602,376 Cu Yds

No. of contracts awarded

27

Total of contracts awarded \$11,227,526

No of contracts completed 39

Total of contracts completed \$16,529,298

+ Downed Timber Removal

Acres completed

10,034 Acs

Payments made

\$1,499,887

Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a unique program led by local volunteer councils that helps people protect and develop their economic, natural, and social resources in ways that improve their area's economy, environment, and quality of life. RC&D generates local support for community improvement activities and locally-led boards and councils. Success of the RC&D program is directly related to the interest and dedication of the appointed council members.

Seven authorized RC&D areas cover the entire state. They are: Acadiana, Bayou Land, Capital, Imperial Calcasieu, Northeast Delta, Trailblazer, Twin Valley

Success Through RC&D



*Acadiana RC&D
Coulee Baton Micro
Watershed Rural Sewer
System Improvement*

Rural communities with aged septic systems are known to be a significant contributor to nonpoint source pollution. A failing septic system can discharge more than 75,000 gallons of untreated wastewater into ground and surface water every year. All of the soils in the Coulee Baton micro watershed have severe limitations with wetness and slow percolation limiting the effectiveness of absorption field lines. In addition to poor soils, over 90percent of the homes in the micro watershed are more than 20 years old with inadequate secondary treatment. A preliminary survey of the micro watershed found that 55 of the 110 homes discharge directly into a public ditch with no secondary treatment of sewage.

In response to this problem, the Acadiana RC&D partnered with the Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) on the Coulee Baton Micro Watershed Sewer System Improvement Project. This program seeks to repair or replace aging, failing home sewer systems, resulting in immediate improvement of surface water quality, and seeks to educate homeowners, installers and inspectors of the advantages of Effluent Reduction Systems (ERS). 16 applications for the program were received, reviewed and ranked, and the demo sites were selected. After a bid process, all three demo systems were installed.

*Bayou Land RC&D
John Martyn School Tree
Farm*



John Martyn School houses the Jefferson Parish Options III Eastbank Site, a special needs program mandated by the State of Louisiana and administered by the Jefferson Parish Public School System to provide both academic and skills education to troubled youths 15, 16, and 17 years of age. The students in the Options III Program are enrolled in an alternative learning program which will hopefully result in of an equivalency high school diploma and job skills.

Mr. Robert Cutrera, a teacher in the Options III Program, sought help to enhance the existing horticulture/greenhouse program and to provide expanded educational opportunities for the students. Project partners included the Bayou Land RC&D, NRCS, Entergy Louisiana, Jefferson Parish Council, Jefferson Parish Public School System, Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful, LSU AgCenter, Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans, Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful, and the Louisiana Urban Forestry Council. The project established a student-operated grow out station for young trees which can be sustained for a five-year cycle; the planting and maintenance of trees, shrubs, and perennials on the school campus; and the introduction of new and improved classes by community and university experts and the acquisition of new teaching materials to support those classes. Two hundred tree seedlings were potted and placed into the tree farm by the teacher and students. Once potted, the trees will be maintained by the students until they are ultimately given away to other schools, community groups, or deserving individuals.

"We deeply appreciate the support that Bayou Land RC&D has given to the John Martyn School Tree Farm Project. We were pleased and blessed to have a very effective network of support organizations and a very productive interaction with the administration and students of the Options III Program at John Martyn School," stated Joe Baucum, President, Louisiana Urban Forestry Council.



*Capital RC&D
Forest Land Invasives Field Day*

The Capital RC&D partnered with NRCS and the LSU Cooperative Extension Service on May 2, 2008, to conduct a forest land invasives field day. Approximately 85 landowners in the Florida Parishes were trained on the identification and control of invasive species that may impact their land. They were also provided with information concerning USDA farm bill programs in relationship to cost share programs.



*Imperial Calcasieu RC&D
Entrepreneur Training Project*

In 2000, the Imperial Calcasieu partnered with NRCS, RD, McNeese State University's Small Business Development Center, and Gulf Coast Soil and Water Conservation District to provide Entrepreneur Training. The need to provide training and education in the area of "starting a business" and "staying in business through the tough times" was the reason this program was started. It has proven to be a huge success and since its inception, over 3,500 people have benefited from the Entrepreneur Training Program. 156 businesses and 234 jobs have been created because of this program. Participation increased in 2008 as the 19 sessions held in targeted areas reached more people. This program is provided free of charge to anyone interested in starting a business or anyone needing assistance with their present business.



*Northeast Delta RC&D Report
Wild Woods Wanderings
Environmental Education Camp*

The 4-H Wild Woods Wanderings Environmental Program was developed to expose 4-H youth to the characteristics of bottomland hardwood forested wetland ecosystems and the challenges related to their management within an agriculture-based economy. The Northeast Delta RC&D and 13 other agencies and organizations host two one-week sessions each summer at Poverty Point State Commemorative Area near Epps, Louisiana. This year approximately 52 students attended the camp. These students learn about the ecosystem in the Tensas River Basin area from farming, hunting recreation, flooding, water quality and quantity and many other aspects of living in a rural agricultural community.

*Trailblazer RC&D
Underserved Forest Landowner
Workshop*

The Trailblazer RC&D, along with NRCS and the Louisiana Forestry Association hosted the 1st Annual Underserved Forest Landowner Workshop on September 30, 2008, in Ruston, Louisiana. It is recognized that the underserved forest landowner population is faced with obstacles that may prevent them from obtaining the needed education and services to maintain success, so a workshop was planned to increase the knowledge level of underserved forest landowners resulting in better managed timber tracts. The workshop began with speakers giving presentations on various topics related to forestry including minority landowners perspective, legal issues involved with ownership, economics of forestry, the benefits of using forest consultants, and state and federal assistance programs. Attendees were invited to participate in the forestry practices tour following the presentations.



*Twin Valley RC&D
2008 Livestock Tour*

Twin Valley RC&D hosted its 10th Annual Livestock Tour August 5 – 8, 2008. Fifty-two participants boarded a chartered bus and toured farms and ranches in Texas and Oklahoma. A few of the operations visited this year include J & I Manufacturing in Madill, Oklahoma; Nelson Land & Cattle Company in Kingston, Oklahoma; and Express Ranch in Yukon, Oklahoma. This successful annual event is highly anticipated by cattle producers from all over Louisiana, who return every year for this tour. Twin Valley RC&D is fortunate to have excellent sponsorship from NRCS and many others to offset the cost of providing this educational tour for Louisiana producers. Jobs are created, operations enhanced, and education on the latest techniques in cattle production is received by the participants on this tour.

LOUISIANA EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEERS

Louisiana Earth Team Volunteers are a cherished workforce that helps us deliver our mission of Helping People Help the Land.

Status Report – Louisiana Volunteers

Total Number of Active Volunteers for FY08 -
635 active volunteers

Total Number of Volunteer Hours -
Total 22,615

Total Number of Offices with active volunteers
56 Offices in Louisiana

Volunteer Success Story

In 2006, the rural community of Iota, Louisiana, received a parcel of land which had been donated for the purpose of building baseball fields and a nature trail. The Northwest Acadia Sports Authority (N.A.S.A.) approached the Acadiana RC&D Council to provide

assistance with the project. The project had stalled for a time because no conceptual design had been submitted by ball park planners and it was difficult to gain community support.

The Council met with Brian Daigle, an Earth Team Volunteer. The design of a ball park appealed to Brian because of his lifelong affiliation with baseball. Brian devoted no less than 400 hours of his time, while attending school also, to develop and design a ball park for the Iota ballpark working group.

Brian was given the challenge of gaining the trust of project partners and community leaders while trying to bring an environmental friendliness throughout the project. Brian spent much time and energy viewing the site, assessing the community's needs, and considering the primary goals of the working group. He repeatedly consulted with plant specialists, construction material providers and his thesis review team. The finished model of the ball park and its corresponding slide show presentation reflects the extent of imaginative yet practical thought Brian invested throughout the process.

His plan is entitled Moody/Amy Memorial Park in honor of the land donor's family. It elegantly addresses the needs and desires of the community it will serve, while attending to conservation issues. The design includes the potential use of recycled materials for dugouts and walkways, potentially reducing construction costs. The dugouts can be dismantled easily in case of impending storms.

The proposed design incorporates an irrigation system which utilizes a pond that will serve as a water reservoir for field runoff, possibly reducing fertilizer costs. The plan considers the natural topography of the site and its orientation to the sun. Landscaping would include the use of native plant species, which require less chemical input and maintenance. In the design, a walking track/nature trail borders a small bayou along the back edge of the field complex, where a natural riparian buffer provides a scenic backdrop. Particularly imaginative is the idea of a floating concession stand at the end of a short pier extending into the pond, a space-efficient concept that frees remaining land surface area for other uses.

From a rural development perspective, the possibilities are almost endless. Brian hopes that the park would be utilized by local citizens for general recreation and team play. The park would exist as a place where citizens gather to strengthen their sense of community, encourage pride in their natural heritage and raise their environmental awareness. His vision includes the likelihood that the park would attract tournament events from a wider geographic range, which would boost the rural economy.

Perhaps this council's pride in his project lies in the fact that it elegantly fulfills both areas of RC&D focus: natural resource conservation and rural development. Without Brian Daigle's enthusiastic response to the need, and because of his diligence to detail and the innovation of the design of the Moody/Amy Memorial Park, the project would not have been able to proceed.

